HOW PET PROJECTS CAN ENHANCE YOUR CAREER AND MAKE YOU HAPPIER

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Devs 4 Devs
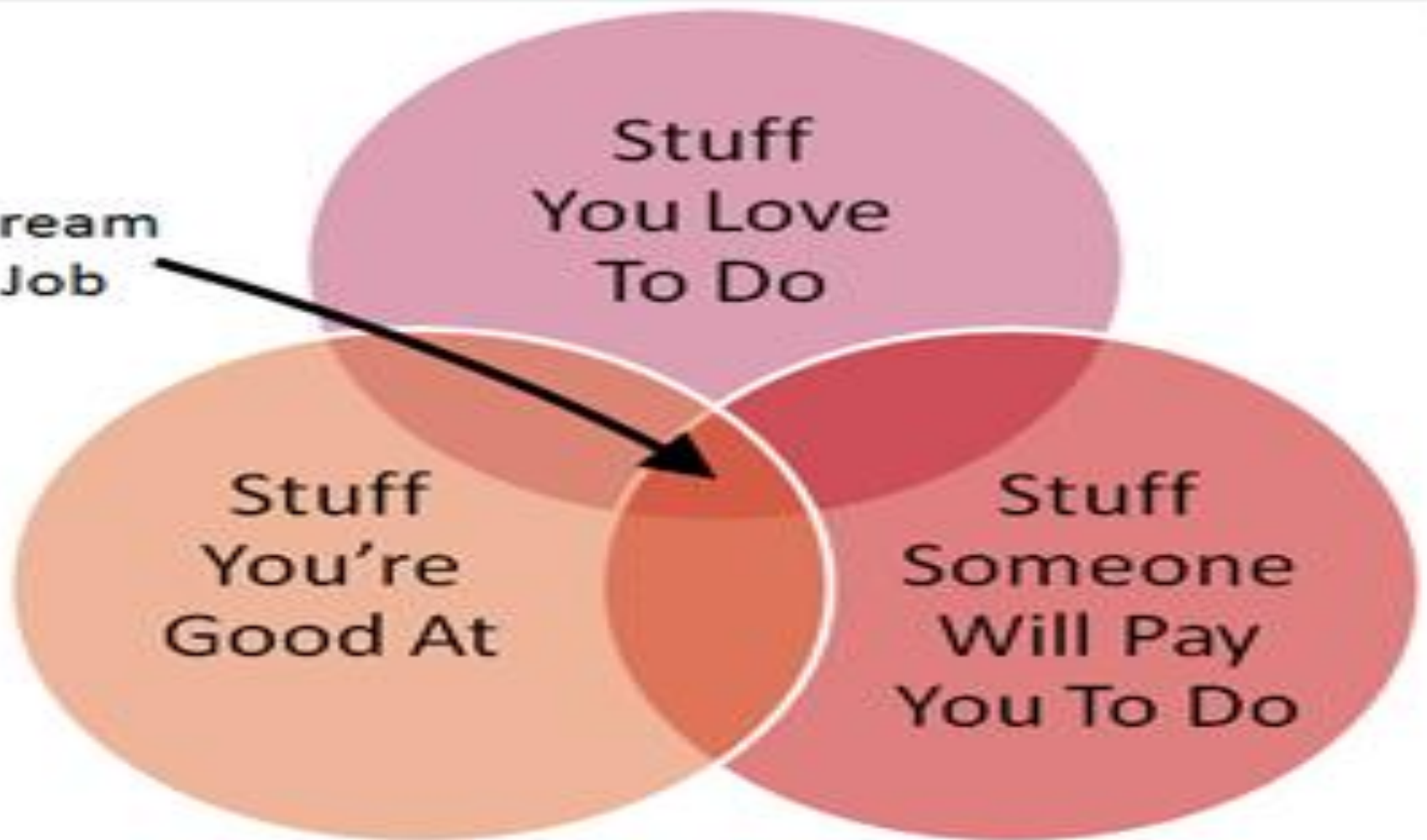
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Definition

Pe*t project*:

 A **mini-project** **you** do because you **want to**

what you're doing vs what you wish you were doing

The problem

- Random factoids:
  - Knowledge <=1 ORM
  - JavaScript is "good for validation and that's about all"
  - Don't read tech books
  - Never attended a user group/Code retreat
  - Single language/vendor skill set
  - Company-time learning or ... nothing
- Skills
- Motivation
- Desire
- No *practicing of creativity*
- Increasing competitiveness in the industry with reduced time to market
- Option Blinkers on
- The Google Gartner Problem
- Your job isn't safe

reason people don't do extra things

the actual reason

MOTIVATION

It's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care.

Why do it?

- *your* creative outlet
- Can be closely aligned to career goals
- Test run your ability to do everything – without major risks
- Great way to learn something new
- Fluff for the CV
- Gives you something to point at and say:
  - "I made that"
- Demonstrates ability to:
  - Get things done
  - Do things on your own
- Learning

Which would you prefer?

Project criteria

- Short duration, but not too short
- Single developer
  - Chance to do end-to-end mini project
  - Demonstration of passion
  - Freedom to find new efficiencies
- Applicable to the business/upcoming projects
- Not overly time-sensitive
- Management buy in
  - Demonstrate need
- Must be fun !

Sample project

- Brief
  - find out what this "object database" thing is
- Owner
- Date required
- Cap on amount of effort: x hours
- Completion criteria:
  - How does it improve on what we're already using/doing?
  - Cost to change to this from SQL?
  - How widely applicable?
  - Who else is using it?
  - Local skills?
  - Should [INSERT YOUR COMPANY HERE] care?
  - 20 minute presentation to all staff
  - Handover document + code
- Reward
  - 10 developer "points"
  - 1 x memory stick
  - Boss to make you coffee for the week

Assignment

- Company-driven
  - Pet Project Pile
  - Rotation policy
- Staff-driven
  - Complete trust / self-organising
  - Vetting Committee
    - Email group / meeting
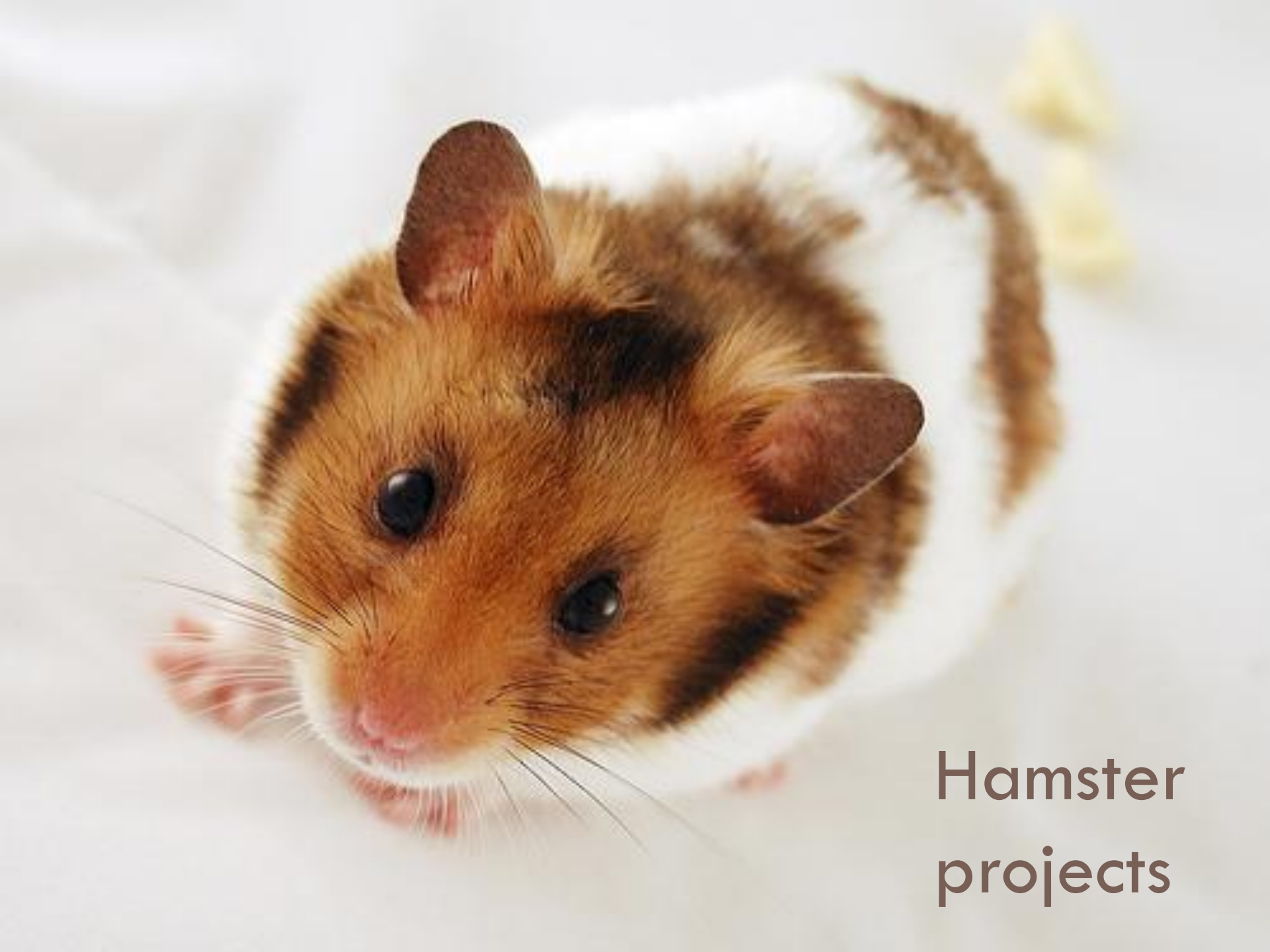
Hamster
projects

Staff rewards

- Keep off payroll / standard project work
- Extrinsic
  - "Thanks a bunch" cabinet
  - Budget for work hardware
- Intrinsic
  - Tribes & recognition
    - Mention at company meeting, Twitter account, etc…
  - Get to play with new stuff
  - Been seen as an expert
  - Knowing you have:
    - Helped & shared info
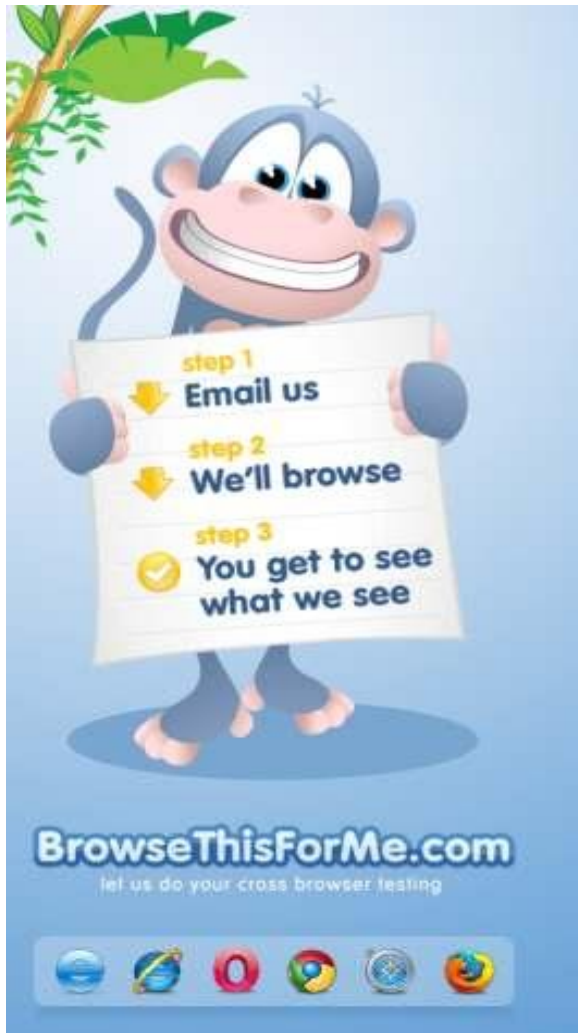   - Accomplished something (on your own)

Company rewards

- Technology
  - R & D, tech reach, knowledge base
- Staff
  - Keeps them engaged
  - Reinforcing the creativity / autonomy angle
- Risk
  - Reduced via "tech spikes"
- Customers
  - Better solution choices
  - Better approaches/processes

Lessons I learnt

browsethisforme.com

- Don't give up too soon

(even if *no one* is using your product)

- If someone says it's a great idea after you've canned it, then … you're a doos

findfreewifi.co.za

□ If you don't use it … no one will

□ Keep trying

□ Great way to make new contacts

□ Make it easy for others to contribute

(because they *really* want to!)

◻ Github hosted code

◻ Non-proprietary code

◻ Ready-to-do tasks on Trello

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www.jsinsa.com

- The 1st customer
- Pivoting is hard
- Iterating is even harder
  - V1 – 2011
  - V2 – 2012
  - V3 – 2013
  - V4 – 2014 ?
- Ask for help before you need it
- DON'T LISTEN TO EVERYONE

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Questions

@BadLassie →

Links of interest

Mindset

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, Shunryu Suzuki

☐ http://www.amazon.com/Zen-Mind-Beginners-Shunryu-Suzuki/dp/1590308492

Product development / business

2007 MySQL conference keynote, Guy Kawasaki

☐ http://itc.conversationsnetwork.org/shows/detail1867.html

Robert Kiyosaki books

☐ http://www.amazon.com/Robert-T.-Kiyosaki/e/B001H6GV90

The Beermat Entrepreneur, Mike Southon

☐ http://www.amazon.com/The-Beermat-Entrepreneur-Great-Business/dp/0273704540

Developer culture

Sharpening the saw, Scott Hanselman

☐ http://www.hanselman.com/blog/SharpenTheSawForDevelopers.aspx

"501" developers, Scott Hanselman

☐ http://www.hanselman.com/blog/501DevelopersFamilyAndExcitementAboutTheCraft.aspx

"If you don't have pet projects, I don't think I want you", Oren Eini

☐ http://ayende.com/blog/90113/if-you-donrsquo-t-have-pet-projects-i-donrsquo-t-think-i-want-you

Links of interest

Time management

How to simplify your life, Kustenmacher

☐ http://www.amazon.com/How-Simplify-Your-Life-Practical/dp/0071433864/

4-hour Workweek, Tim Ferriss

☐ http://www.amazon.com/4-Hour-Workweek-Anywhere-Expanded-Updated/dp/0307465357/

Value of time, Jack Groetzinger

☐ http://jackg.org/the-value-of-time

Relationship Hacks, Hanselman

☐ https://leanpub.com/RelationshipHacks

   Lifehacker: "How I work" series

☐ http://lifehacker.com/how-i-work/

General stuff

Coursera - gamification

☐ https://www.coursera.org/course/gamification

General Reading

☐ http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57550445-93/jack-dorsey-twitter-was-built-in-two-weeks/

☐ http://techcrunch.com/2012/01/20/do-great-things/

☐ http://pandodaily.com/2013/04/02/an-acquisition-is-always-a-failure/

☐ http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663137/how-3m-gave-everyone-days-off-and-created-an-innovation-dynamo

☐ http://www.slideshare.net/playfulwingmen/gamification-extrinsic-vs-intrinsic-rewards-17681228

Augmented Reality demo

☐ http://www.qualcomm.com/solutions/augmented-reality

☐ https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/chest-burster/id536120336?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D4

Productivity

☐ http://www.thedailymuse.com/career/a-better-to-do-list-the-1-3-5-rule/

☐ http://www.pomodorotechnique.com/